

IOWA'S CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING

NETWORK MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



MARSHALLTOWN'S "TO DO LIST"

THE PROBLEM

Grade Level Reading

The evidence is clear: children must be proficient readers when they leave third grade or they run the risk of never catching up with their peers. Third grade is that pivotal time when young people transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." However, in Marshalltown, over 33% of our children are not able to read proficiently as they leave the third grade. Even with a low overall district 3rd grade proficiency rate (65.8%) there is a further achievement gap with Hispanic, Asian, English language learners, African American, and low socio-economic status students.

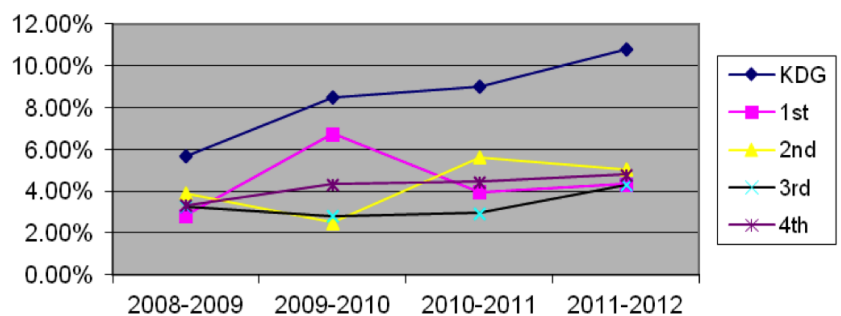
STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Marshalltown Community School District (MCSD) meets the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standard of 95% daily attendance. However, we are concerned about the children identified as "chronically absent." Students are identified as chronically absent when they miss 18 or more days in a school year (10% or more of the school year).

The **trend** for all grade levels is rising, with kindergartners in the MCSD experiencing an especially disturbing steady and steep rise.

When reasons for chronic absences were reviewed, parents indicated health issues as the cause for absences in 84% of instances. A total of 106 students in approximately 70 families were chronically absent in grades k- 3rd in the 2011-2012 school year.

Chronic Absence



Goal: There will be a community culture supporting every child in school and learning every day.

Overarching Strategy: Reach every sector of the community with the message that "every day counts" and provide information that assists everyone in the community to support children's optimal attendance

The Strategies

- » Targeting early intervention through a pre-K emphasis on attendance and family support for "early signalers"
- » Building a culture of attendance in the community through an "Every day counts" campaign
- » Rewarding and incentivizing attendance for children and their parents*
- » Developing a Health and Attendance Advisory Group to study health issues among young children in the community, use of the medical system by families and to provide guidance on practices that improve attendance and optimal use of health services

***Pilot** - The Chamber, Lennox Industries and the Hughes Grove neighborhood Association participated in recognitions during the Rogers University summer learning program. Numerous community representatives are participating in recognition ceremonies at all elementary buildings in January to recognize first semester or second quarter attendance.

SUMMER LEARNING

Summer learning loss is a term coined to explain the loss of skills, memory, and knowledge that occurs from being out of school during summer vacation. According to a report released in 2011 by the RAND Corporation, the average summer learning loss in math and reading for American students amounts to one month per year. However, low-income students are disproportionately affected as they lose two months of reading skills. A study from Johns Hopkins University of students in Baltimore found that about two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income ninth graders could be explained by *cumulative* summer learning loss during the elementary school years. As a result, no matter how effective schools are, the traditional school calendar creates an inefficient system of learning. According to the RAND report, however, the loss is preventable. Summer programs with individualized instruction, parental involvement, and small classes can keep children from falling behind and reduce the achievement gap. It is not enough to simply give students something to do. Summer programming must contain elements that assure quality. A set of quality elements have been identified through a Rand report: *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*.



Goal: Summer learning loss will be eliminated for children in our community

Overarching Strategy: Building on existing platforms, all children in need of summer enrichment will have access to activities that maintain the growth of the previous school year.

The Strategies

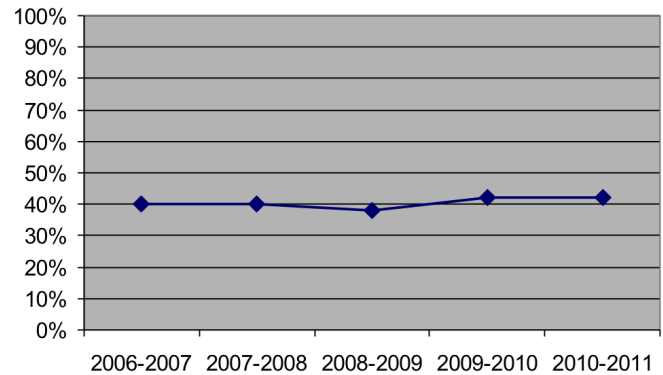
- » Integrating quality summer learning practices into current summer offerings
- » Mirroring the Rogers University concept in other elementary neighborhoods*
- » Increasing access to library programs*
- » Supporting MCSD's exploration of an innovative school year calendar

*** Pilot** - Adding a reading program to the summer meal site at Anson. Volunteers read to the children, children read to each other and volunteers, and books are available for the children to read and to take with them. A brief program was held at the end of the 2012 summer meal program.

SCHOOL READINESS

One issue that contributes to this troubling data is the fact that many of our students do not come to the public school “ready” for kindergarten. On the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), one of the universal assessments utilized at MCSD, only 42% of entering kindergartners scored at low risk for reading difficulties. In other words, 58% of children entered school without the expected core competencies for reading. This is not a new phenomenon. During the past 5 years only 40% of students have entered school ready, as indicated by the DIBELS. The current slots available for preschool are not adequate to meet the needs of our children. With the current capacity, approximately 209 three and four year olds have no access to preschool. Most of the available Pre-k programs are offered to students for ten hours a week nine months of the year. And, while the community has access to some evidenced-based programming for 0-3 year olds, there is not nearly enough availability to meet the need.

Percent of Students Ready for Kindergarten Per DIBELS



Goal: 85% of children entering kindergarten will be “ready”

Overarching Strategy: A common set of expectations of school readiness are generally known, taught and measured across the community.

The Strategies

- » Increasing the availability of home visiting programming and other parent education programs for families with children birth to age 3
- » Initiating a community campaign to increase general understanding of expectations
- » Distributing books and resource information to assist professionals and parents to increase child readiness
- » Increasing preschool opportunities for three and four year olds and increasing access to this capacity
- » Providing professional development for providers of services in contact with parents who have young children- create a consistent community message and information delivered at several community gateways to family support
- » Creating Reading Corners throughout community businesses and other organizations

STEERING COMMITTEE

Allison Vaughn, Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA) Marshall County Family Development Director

Bettie Bolar, Director, Community Foundation of Marshall County

Carol Hibbs, CEO, Community Y

Carrie Soddors, MICA Early Head Start Director

Clarissa Thompson, MICA Family and Community Development Director

David Giese, Board Member, Area Education Agency 267

Heidi Pierson, Program Manager, Martha-Ellen Tye Foundation

Jennifer Wilson, Director, Iowa Valley Community College District (IVCCD) Education and Training Center and Marshalltown Community School District (MCSD) Board Member

Joan Jaimes, Director, Marshalltown Educational Partnership (MEP)

John Johnson, Parent and MCSD Board Member

Julie Underhill, Teacher, Rogers Elementary, MCSD

Ken Anderson, President, Marshalltown Chamber of Commerce

Linda Havelka, Associate Director, Child Abuse Prevention Services

LuAnn Lura, Teacher, Rogers Elementary, MCSD

Mark Smith, State Representative and Director of Special Projects/Mental Health Consultant, Substance Abuse Treatment Unit of Central Iowa

Dr. Marvin Wade, Superintendent, MCSD

Dr. Mick Jurgensen, Principal, Rogers Elementary, MCSD

Nancy Steveson, Executive Director, United Way of Marshall County

Randy Wetmore, Marshalltown City Administrator

Sarah Rosenblum, Director, Marshalltown Public Library

Shirley Faircloth, Juvenile Court Officer

Sue Martin, Community Member

We also have active task forces for Attendance, Summer Learning and Readiness.

WHERE POLICY AND FUNDING CHANGES COULD ASSIST OUR EFFORT:

- » Communities with high levels of low SES families, English language learners and new immigrant populations need many more **resources** to reach families with children ages **birth to three**, a crucial period of development for children. **Extensive outreach** for parents of preschool eligible students is essential, as well. Our families need assistance just to understand how young children learn and grow and how our educational system works. Such outreach may require more effort and duration than have been typically used.
- » There needs to be **sufficient Pre-K programming** for all children and the ability to offer a powerful enough programming in terms of duration and intensity to assist children who have not had an early childhood with as enriched experiences as their middle income peers.
- » For certain communities, **the 180 day, nine month school calendar no longer meets the needs of the students**. Access to innovative and experimental models and the ability to try such models needs to be supported and not only allowed, but encouraged. Additionally, the opportunity for greater intensity of the educational experience by allowing **much**



smaller student/teacher ratios is crucial-if not in the regular school year classroom, then in out-of- regular-school-hour programming. Both of these areas will require additional funding.

- » **Family engagement** is crucial to provide ongoing opportunity for and engagement of children and to assist parents in meeting the goals they have for their children. Research shows that **out-of-school factors** have to be recognized and addressed for students to be able to take full advantage of the in-school educational experiences.
- » Funding for school nurses and other persons to **address health issues** is needed. Time and resources for nutrition and physical activity are vital to keep the whole child healthy, engaged and learning.

CONTACTS

Lindsey Upah

Spread the words-read by 3rd! Coordinator
Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)
1001 South 18th Avenue
Marshalltown, IA 50158
641.752.7162
Lindsey.upah@micaonline.org

Arlene McAtee

Executive Director
Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA)
1001 South 18th Avenue
Marshalltown, IA 50158
641.752.7162
Arlene@micaonline.org